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Love is Young

Both Mary Robison in her short story “Yours” and Elizabeth Tallent in her story “No One’s a Mystery” explore the dynamics of romantic relationships where one lover is much older than the other. In “Yours” the couple is married and in “No One’s a Mystery” the couple is having an affair, and yet despite this the much younger women share several striking similarities. Both women have deliberately chosen to get involved with these older men; both women want children, but will not be able to have them with these men; and both women understand by the end of these stories that their relationships too will soon end, even though neither woman wants this to happen.

Each woman has deliberately chosen to become involved with a much older man, yet they become involved for very different reasons. Allison, in “Yours” is thirty-five years old and her husband, Clark, is seventy-eight. Even though she is forty-three years younger than he, she didn’t marry him for his money like his daughter thinks. Clark’s daughter writes to him ‘You’re being cruelly deceived “(Robison 130). The reality is that Allison has married Clark for his companionship and not his wallet. She is very ill and needs someone to comfort and care for her these last few days that she has to live. She wants to spend her last days with someone who will be there emotionally and help her through this rough time. After they finish carving pumpkins he makes her feel good about herself by telling her, “look at me... Yours are far better.” -(Robison 131). He doesn’t want her to feel like she cannot accomplish something just because of her illness. In “No One’s a Mystery” the girl is just eighteen years old and the man with whom she is having an affair, Jack, is around thirty-two. She is involved with him because he brings

excitement into her life. The narrator says, -‘It’s true there wasn’t ever much else to do in Cheyenne’ -(Tallent 632). She is bored and has nothing better to do than ‘fool around’ with a married man. The girl finds the validation she is looking for in Jack that she isn’t receiving in high school. She probably doesn’t like going to school because of social acceptance. Jack also offers her things that a young girl shouldn’t be having; tequila and sex. Because she is only eighteen, she cannot legally drink alcohol. The girl and Jack have “been drinking tequila and the bottle was between his legs, resting up against his crotch” (Tallent 632). This shows what their relationship is really all about: which is sex and booze.

The women in each story both want children, but will not be able to have them with these men. In “Yours” Allison “volunteer[s] afternoons at a children’s daycare center” (Rohison 130) even though she is weak from the cancer. This shows how much she wants to be around kids because she really would like to have some of her own. She is already thirty-five and hasn’t had them yet. She won’t ever get to accomplish this because she is sterile from the chemo therapy used to stop her cancer. But also, she will never have children because “a few weeks earlier in her life than had been predicted she began to die” (Rohison 131). Even if Allison could have kids, the cancer won’t let her live the nine months needed to have one. In Tallent’s “No One’s a Mystery” the girl tells Jack in a very detailed fantasy of how she envisions having his kids. She fantasizes about their first child “Little Jack” (Tallent 632) and their second one “Eliza Rosamund” (Tallent 633). Even though she can have these kids with him, it’s never going to happen because he doesn’t want too. He won’t leave his wife to form a family with her. After

hearing her fantasy he tells her,” ‘it’s kind of a bittersweet smell, if you want to know the truth’ -(Tallent 633). It’s sweet because it sounds beautiful, but bitter because it’s never going to come true. He isn’t going to marry and have any kids with her in the future. The girl is only eighteen and will most likely have kids with someone else, just not Jack.

Unlike Allison whose time has ran out, the girl can still become a mother down the road.

Both women are in relationships that will soon end, though they don’t want this to happen. Allison, from “Yours” because of the progression of her cancer, is dying. She is such a fighter that she doesn’t want to leave this world just yet. When they are about to go to bed Allison tells Clark, -‘Don’t blow out the candles’ “(Rohison 131). The candles represent her life, and she doesn’t want him to end them so soon. She wants the candles to run their course and fade out themselves. Allison still cares how she looks for Clark and tells him,” ‘Don’t look at me if my wig comes off...Please’ “(Robison 131). Because of what the chemo did to her, she has no hair on her head and doesn’t want him to see her that way. She is still cares of how she looks for him. When she’s in bed she doesn’t want to be covered with the sheets even though it is cold; Allison “raise[s] her knees and kick[s] away the comforter” (Rohison 131). She doesn’t want the comforter to go over her head as if saying that she’s dead, so she kicks them off because she is not ready to die, not yet. In “No One’s a Mystery” the girl believes that she is going to end up marrying Jack, hut that isn’t going to happen. He seems very hesitant to leave his wife for the girl. Jack cuts down her fantasy and says,” It must have been a fast divorce’ “(Tallent 632). He cuts down her hopes by saying that it is very doubtful he is going to get a divorce from his wife. This will eventually be the cause that puts an end to their affair. The girl is going to constantly keep insisting that Jack needs to leave his wife if he wants

to continue being with her. He will never do it because all he is looking for is a good time. The girl has taken things seriously and even fantasizes marrying him and having his children. Jack puts down this fantasy by saying, “I like yours... But I believe mine’ “(Tallent 633). He crushes her fantasies and tells her that it is never going to happen.

Throughout both stories Robison and Tallent explore the dynamics of romantic relationships where one lover is much older than the other. In Robison’s “Yours” the couple is married and in Tallent’s “No One’s a Mystery” the couple is having an affair. Even though their relationships seem different they do have some similarities. Both women have chosen to get involved with much older men: both women want children, but will not have them with these men: and both women understand by the end of these stories that their relationships too will soon end, even though neither woman wants this to happen. The titles of these two stories tell the reader the relationship the characters have. The title “Yours” is exactly what Allison and Clark are. They have a good relationship and are open with each other. “No One’s a Mystery” relates to the girls and Jacks relationship which is more sexual than emotional, in the end neither couple will survive time and will eventually end up going their own separate ways.

Works Cited

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